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ABSTRACT

This non-random survey of 614 high-school students, recent high-school graduates, and out-of-school youth, offers insights into young people's friendships, their peer group relationships and activities, their high-school hierarchies, their personal images and reputations, and the influences of peers and others on their decisions and behaviors. The poll approached peer relationships in two ways: through individual and group questionnaires. The results are presented in four chapters. Chapter one examines different facets of friendship such as developmental differences in peer relationships, the qualities that young people seek in friends, what they argue about, why friendships break up, and what behaviors are hardest to forgive. Chapter two looks at per groups: where they meet, what they do together, and how groups of friends are viewed by families. High-school social structures are examined in chapter three while chapter four reports on students' perceptions of some of the influences that peer groups and other groups have on behavior. The report underscores the power of peer relationships and the importance of friendships in youth development. Included are questions for further discussion, an annotated list of publications on adolescent life, and a copy of the youth poll questionnaire. (RJM)

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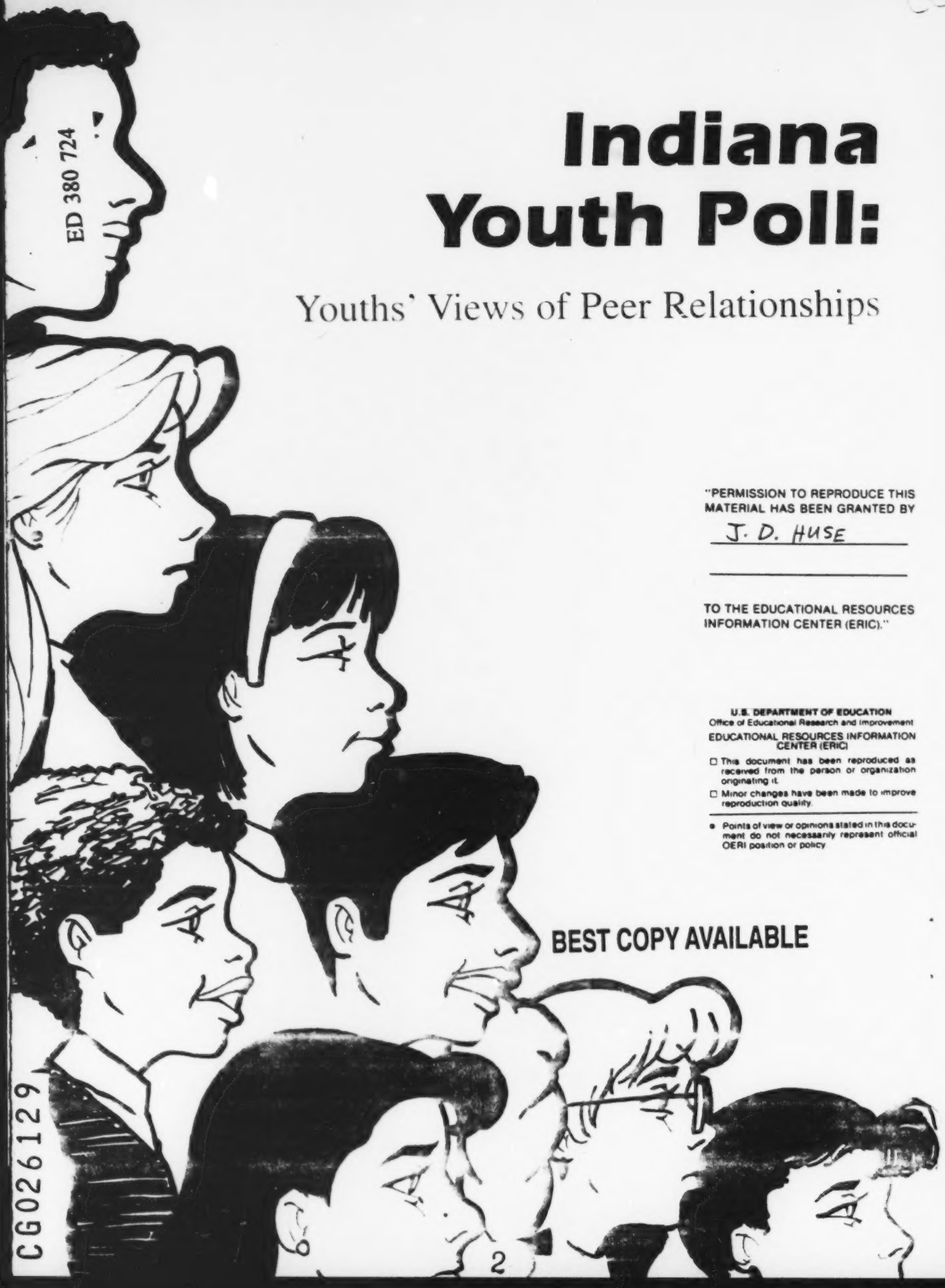
Indiana Youth Poll:

Youths' Views of Peer Relationships



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We believe that the state of Indiana can and should become a state that genuinely cares about its young people and that its national reputation should reflect that concern and commitment.

To enhance that commitment, the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) works with adults who care about youth.

- IYI advocates for better service for Indiana's young people, both directly and in collaboration with others.
- IYI develops strategies to increase youth-serving professionals' knowledge, caring, and competence.
- IYI cultivates and supports innovative projects that hold promise for improving the lives of Indiana's young people.

We believe that the key to the success of young people is in the hands of the adults who care about them.

IYI is an intermediary agency that supports youth development professionals and decision makers with advocacy, research, and training.

INDIANA YOUTH POLL:

Youths' Views of Peer Relationships

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YOUTH POLL HIGHLIGHTS

Youths' Views of Peer Relationships summarizes what more than 600 Hoosier young people responding to the Indiana Youth Poll told us about friendships, peer group relationships and activities, high-school hierarchies, personal images and reputations, and the influences of peers and others on decisions and behaviors. This report presents a youth viewpoint on a subject about which many adults make assumptions. Young people in groups are sometimes seen as "up to something," often strange, and even frightening. To young people themselves, youth poll respondents told us, relationships with peers are a source of support and stability. Through interacting with others, they define and come to know and accept themselves.

The methodology of the youth poll approached the subject of peer relationships in two ways, through individual and group questionnaires. The former yielded responses reflecting the personal experiences and opinions of individual students. Individual responses were tabulated and analyzed by standard quantitative techniques. The group questionnaires generated a rich body of qualitative information, produced by small, self-selected discussion groups. The group questions often asked young people to move beyond personal experience to make generalizations about their schools and other students. The content of the group responses was analyzed for patterns and themes. Illustrative comments in the students' own words are included in this report.

Most young people told us they have one or two peers, most often of the same gender, that they have known for several years and consider to be their "closest" friends. Most also reported having a somewhat larger circle of 10 or more peers with whom they regularly "hang out." A majority of respondents had met the youths in their peer groups in school settings. Most of the groups were of mixed gender, but tended to be homogeneous with respect to age and ethnicity; about half said groups included members from more than one school and of more than one religious faith.

Adolescent development theory describes the changing nature of friendships and peer relationships over the course of the junior and senior high-school years. At several points in the report we have included reminders of what in this body of knowledge is considered "normal" for mid-adolescents. The responses of young Hoosiers not only showed them to be in the mainstream of devel-

opmental changes generally, but also to be quite aware of some of the changes they had already experienced. Although students recognized that at times peer pressures may induce them to act against their own better judgment, most respondents strongly endorsed peers as a source of constructive pressure that helps them do the "right" things. Students compared the attractions of friendship groups, cliques, and gangs. Interestingly, they found the motivations for joining similar for all three: a place to belong and feel accepted and a source of support in their everyday lives.

Information we found to be of particular interest of this youth poll came from students' discussions of school hierarchies. High-school social systems and their status ladders have received decades of attention from social scientists. The youth poll responses suggest that current status hierarchies are as prominent a part of Hoosier high-school life as they were when the Lynd's and their platoon of researchers descended on "Middletown" (Muncie) in the 1920s and 1930s. Athletes with good personalities ("jocks") continue to have high status. Students with musical ability and who achieve academic success are not considered to be as "cool." We found disturbing the consensus among respondents that once an individual's image and reputation is "set," it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change others' opinions. Such findings have many implications for the success of students returning to school after dropping out or "doing time" in a state juvenile facility.

Final items on the individual questionnaire asked students about the relative influence of parents, friends in general, boyfriends or girlfriends, and their own judgment on several types of decisions ranging from taste in clothes or music to much more serious matters such as making post-high-school plans, drinking or "doing drugs" and having sex. Regardless of the decision involved, by large majorities, students were most likely to indicate they relied on their own judgment. Parents were the next strongest influence, particularly on the more serious decisions. To a lesser extent, boyfriends or girlfriends also influenced decisions, particularly on alcohol or drug use, or having sex. Friends in general were the weakest among the four sources of influence. We feel that this finding underscores the importance of teaching young people critical thinking and decision-making skills.

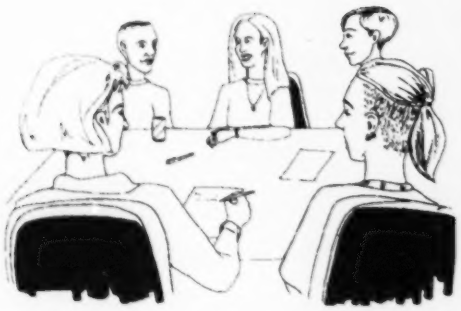
It is our hope that this report will stimulate further discussion about peer relationships among young people themselves and among young people and adults—family members, friends, educators, and youthworkers—as they struggle to provide supports needed for growing up in an always complex and sometimes unfriendly world.

INTRODUCTION

This youth poll report is the third of a series that looks at life from the perspective of Hoosier high-school students, recent high-school graduates, and out-of-school youth. Through this poll, more than 600 young people from across the state of Indiana shared their experiences. Their own words describe relationships with their closest friends and the groups with whom they "hang out."

Youth polls enrich knowledge about adolescents by providing insights that can help adults understand what is behind the statistics that are often used to describe events in young people's lives. The topic for this poll, peer relationships, was chosen by the Indiana Youth Institute's Youth Advisory Council, a group of high-school students from across Indiana. These young people serve in an advisory capacity and as a "sounding board" for the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI). The Council members not only took a very active part in defining the topic of this youth poll but also helped develop and refine the questionnaires. The questions reflect what these young people wanted adults to know about their social relationships and the roles that peers play in their lives.

The Indiana Youth Poll is a project of the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI). IYI is committed to helping Indiana become a state that genuinely cares about its young people. The Indiana Youth Institute's work is predicated on the *10 Blueprints for Healthy Development* that appear on the inside back cover of this report. Two of the blueprints, building positive relationships and building self-acceptance, are particularly relevant to the present study. Young Hoosiers need to "develop wholesome relationships while learning to work collaboratively with peers and adults." They also must "perceive themselves as lovable and capable," able to "act with self-confidence, self-reliance, self-direction, and self-control. They will take pride in their accomplishments. As they develop self-esteem, they will have positive feelings about their own uniqueness as well as that of others."



This report underscores the power of peer relationships and the importance of friendships in healthy youth development. Young people told us, for example, that a student's place in the peer social hierarchy is pretty well set early in her or his high-school career, and, once set, an "image" is likely to be very difficult to change. The respondents' comments suggest that reaching the goals set forth in the *Blueprints* will not be easy for many young people

who lack social skills, or who, for other reasons, do not "fit in." Unfavorable first impressions may, for some, even preclude future opportunities to gain approval. Youth poll respondents recognized that the need for acceptance is strong—strong enough to lead some vulnerable young people into domineering cliques or delinquent street gangs.

Understanding peer relationships

Because of the importance that peer relationships have in young people's lives, an important component to caring about youth is that adults seek to learn more about their relationships with peers. In educating youthworkers, Mike Baizerman at the University of Minnesota talks about the "grape" approach to understanding adolescents. If an adult wishes to understand the individual, he says, that adult must first learn about the "bunch" she or he hangs with. This youth poll was designed by young people to help adults understand the roles that peers—as individuals and as groups—play in the lives of Hoosier high-school students. It is hoped that the information in this report will stimulate discussion and understanding not only among adults—parents, teachers, counselors, youthworkers, probation officers, lawmakers, and others—but also among young people who shape each other's lives.

The Indiana Youth Poll method

The Indiana Youth Poll employs a distinctive methodology, developed first by the late Diane Hedin and associates at the University of Minnesota. Young people are asked to participate in youth polls in two ways. First, they reply as individuals to a short questionnaire. Most of the questions on the individual questionnaire are closed-ended. They use check lists or scales for expressing degree of agreement (or disagreement) with a statement. For the second part of the poll, students form self-selected discussion groups of three to six members. Each small group appoints one member as its reader/recorder. This person reads a series of related, open-ended questions and records what group members say in the discussion that follows. These discussion groups have many of the features of focus groups. Both individual and group questionnaires used in this youth poll are appended to this report. Completing a youth poll takes about 50-60 minutes.

The next steps of the method involve analysis of the youth poll responses. Where appropriate, individual responses are coded and analyzed using standard quantitative techniques. The qualitative content of the group questionnaires is scrutinized. Analysis involves "sifting" the responses to each group discussion question to discover patterns and major themes. The number of times

a given theme appears among the groups' responses is tallied. Youth polls try to report information in ways that capture both "the words and the music" of what the young people have told us.

The participants in this poll

Altogether, 614 young people participated in the youth poll. Most of these participants were current students or very recent graduates from 191 of the state's 352 public and 293 private high schools. All regions of the state were represented. These young people formed themselves into 139 discussion groups to complete the second part of the poll.

Among the respondents were 26 out-of-school youth participating in high-school equivalency (GED) programs and 68 residents of a state juvenile facility for young males. (We had hoped to include young women in a state juvenile facility among the youth poll respondents, but were unable to do so.) In most respects, as expected, young male Hoosiers on both sides of the wall shared similar views on the importance of friendships. Where there were substantial differences, we have tabulated the responses of the two groups of young men separately. Several reviewers of this report have suggested that perhaps the biggest difference in the two groups is that one is composed of youths who "got caught."

We wish to stress at the outset that the young people who participated in this poll are not a random sample of all Hoosier youth. Therefore, their responses cannot be used to draw conclusions about all of Indiana's young people. Nevertheless, this report contains a broad range of views from a diverse group of young people (described in Table 1).[1] The comments of the youth poll participants can be used as a window on the perceptions of many Hoosier adolescents. It is our hope that educators and youthworkers will engage the young people with whom they work in conversations about issues of friendship, peer relationships and influences, images and reputations, and activities they do or would like to do. We hope that questions include: Is the social system in our school or organization as fixed as the youth poll respondents felt theirs to be? Do we need to change? Where could changes begin? Are there things that adults could do to change the "climate" of schools or organizations to make it easier for young people to form friendships and find peer groups to enjoy?

The body of research dealing with adolescent peer relationships has been growing steadily since the 1960s when the "baby boomers" entered their teen years. In general, the responses of the youth poll participants were very consistent with findings of other studies. We felt that readers of this report would find

Table 1. Characteristics of Youth Poll Participants

	%
Gender:	
Male	42.5
Female	57.2
Ethnicity:	
White	68.4
African-American	23.3
Asian	.3
Hispanic/Latino	2.4
Native American	.7
Other/multi-ethnic[a]	3.7
Grade in School:	
Junior high	3.1
Nine	6.5
Ten	19.1
Eleven	43.3
Twelve	15.0
Recent graduate/GED	11.2
Family Type:	
2 parent, biological	58.3
2 parent, blended[b]	10.8
1 parent, mother only	16.8
1 parent, father only	3.1
Other relatives	2.9
Nonrelatives	.5
Extended family[c]	4.4
Lives alone	.3
Other	2.1
School type:	
Metropolitan	56.5
Suburban	17.1
Town	4.4
Rural	13.5
Other	3.9
School Governance:	
Public	59.1
State-supported	9.4
Private	23.0
Other	4.2

(n = 614)

[a] Includes individuals who marked more than one ethnic category and those who marked "other."

[b] Two-parents in household, one of whom is a stepparent.

[c] Family includes others besides parent(s) and their child(ren).

references to some current thinking about peer relationships of interest and have included this material at various points in the text. Several books that discuss or summarize information about peer relationships are listed in an appendix, "To Read More About Adolescent Life."

About this report

Chapter 1 examines friendships. It begins with a brief look at developmental differences in peer relationships and then discusses the qualities that young people seek in friends, what they argue about, why friendships break up, and what behaviors are hardest to forgive. Chapter 2 looks at peer groups: where they meet, what they do together and how groups of friends are viewed by families. Chapter 3 examines high-school social structures—who's on top, who's on the bottom, and what counts most for social success. Chapter 4 reports on students' perceptions of some of the influences that peer groups and other groups have on behaviors.

As stated above, it is our hope that this report will stimulate discussion among young people as well as adults. At the end of the report, there is a set of questions to help get conversations started, along with a list of resources for those who wish to read more about peer relationships. We encourage others to use the enclosed youth poll questionnaires to learn more about young people in their own groups.

Human life, fully lived, is life lived with people. How children "get along" with others is one of the earliest appraisals they must bear. Applied early, labels such as "gets along well" or "can't get along" with peers often precede a child as he or she moves into new settings such as a school grade, Sunday

CHAPTER 1

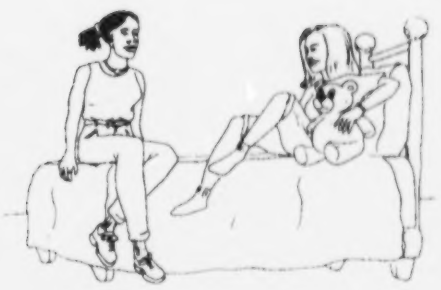
FRIENDSHIPS

Developmental changes in peer relationships

school class, or neighborhood youth group—sometimes becoming, along the way, a self-fulfilling prophecy of the child's behavior. American parents and teachers and youth-group leaders expect children to get along with others. Failure to do so is deemed an early sign of a troubled life ahead.

On their own, and with encouragement from others, individuals unite with peers to form groups that become part of human life from early childhood onward. For the young child, friendships and peer groups are transitory, often based on who is available and wants to join in an activity. With entry into middle childhood—the lower elementary grades in school—peer groups take on new importance. Much of the centuries-old lore of childhood—games and jokes, for example—can only be enjoyed when shared. Through group participation, children develop interests, try to gain a sense of how they compare with others, find social and emotional support, and learn the important skills involved in "getting along." By middle childhood, being accepted and liked by others has become a paramount concern.

As children mature cognitively and socially, peer groups and friendships take on new meanings. Group influence on children's behavior appears to be greatest as childhood ends and they move toward adolescence. Attempting to gain acceptance, the 9- to 11- or 12-year-old will often suspend "better judgment" to conform to group pressure. This is the age of the "wanna-be." It is also the age of "chum-ship"—usually with a same-sex peer—when young people begin to understand the commitments involved in close relationships. Developing the capacities for understanding others' motives and points of view gives youngsters greater potential for being intentionally supportive—or hurtful—to others. Early adolescence, with heightened recognition of differences, is a period when young people are particularly active in sorting themselves and others into categories and hierarchies based on perceived distinctions. This is a stage of development characterized by relationships that are often intense and volatile.



During the high-school years, the earlier powerful sway of the peer group diminishes, although it does not disappear. Most mid-adolescents have gained the social skills required for membership in a group to "hang out with" as well as the ability to make and sustain a few close friendships. Young people lacking social competence are increasingly marginalized in the adolescent society and may never find their ways back into the mainstream. Isolated young people are more likely to retain the early adolescent's vulnerability to pressures from peers: that is, to use alcohol and other drugs, to engage in hostile behaviors, to have a sense of inadequacy and to believe that what happens in their lives is beyond their control. These young people on the fringe of the peer culture are also more likely to drop out of school altogether.

Among the many changes experienced by typical adolescents is the development of a new level of reasoning. From about the age of 12 on, young people have the potential to think in abstractions. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget called these new cognitive abilities "formal operations." Adolescents become able to approach problem solving more systematically than they could when younger and can analyze a proposition from more than one perspective. They can think about "what-ifs;" they can examine what is, and imagine what could be. These maturing cognitive abilities have many ramifications for adolescents' social relationships.

The relationships typical of mid-adolescence are very much an outcome of cognitive growth. David Elkind has described the impact of adolescents' abilities to "think in a new key" about their relationships with others.[2] Their expanding critical thinking skills enable young people to analyze their own motives and impute motives to others; they can strategize and imagine the strategies of others. Attention to the physical transformations they are undergoing often leads to intense self-consciousness. They are critical of others, but also of themselves—ever alert to slights and snubs, both real and imagined. Elkind talks of the "imaginary audience" that motivates much adolescent taste and behavior.

Now able to imagine an ideal, young people typically become idealistic. They often find fault with authority figures such as parents or teachers when these former heroes fail to measure up to an imagined ideal. At the same time, Elkind notes, their own behavior often appears hypocritical because they have difficulty recognizing "the difference between expressing an ideal and working toward it."[3] Emerging abilities to see subtleties are practiced in argumentation that can seem

endless, and often pointless, to others. Their enlarged vision of possibilities can lead to indecision. Sometimes, it seems to adults, more time and energy are devoted to making decisions about where to go, what to do, and what to wear than to an activity itself.

By mid-adolescence, friendships have usually moved away from the largely self-interested stage of "I'll scratch your back, if you'll scratch mine," to mutual sharing. Friends are treasured, and young people have begun to understand that keeping friendships demands a certain amount of commitment and nurturing. Younger adolescents may be very possessive of "best friends" until they come to understand that everyone must strike a balance between needs for dependency and autonomy. Eventually, they come to understand the interdependence of relationships.

As adolescent friendships become more reciprocal, they are more likely to be based on shared interests and values than are the relationships of younger children. Research on adolescent social life consistently finds that mid-adolescents typically have a small number of close friends and a larger group of peers with whom they "hang out." Both types of relationships are extremely important to their evolving value systems and social development.

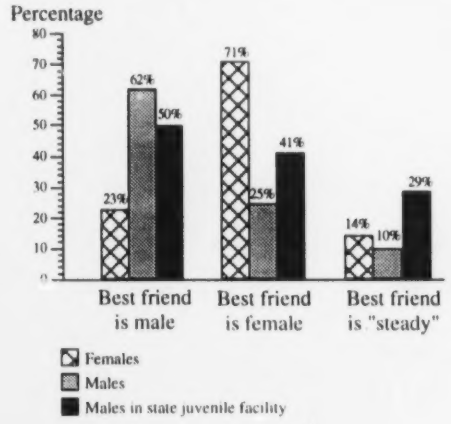
Best friends

Youth poll participants were questioned about their close friendships. One of the first questions asked was: "Is there someone you would consider your 'best friend?'" Almost all of the young people—88% of the males and 95% of the females—reported having best friends. These close friendships were most likely to be with a person of the same gender (Figure 1). Seven in ten girls reported being best friends with another girl, while about six in ten boys reported closest friendships with other boys.[4] We went on to ask whether the "best" friend identified was also a "steady boy- or girlfriend." For most (86% of the girls and 90% of the boys), best friends were not their "steadies." This finding raises the question of whether the sharing and soul-baring typical of "best" friendships may be viewed as too great a test for romantic attachments.

About a third of the respondents had known their best friends for one to three years. Nearly a third (32%) of the girls, however, and more than a fourth (27%) of the boys had known their best friends for eight or more years. The average duration of these relationships was five years (no gender differences). Close friendships of both boys (45%) and girls (58%)

were most likely to have originated at school. Neighborhoods were also important meeting places (9% for boys and 7% for girls). Other friendships were formed through introductions by relatives (6%), community-based youth organizations (4%), sports activities (3%), and religious youth groups (2%). Gender differences were insignificant.

Figure 1. Best Friends



Qualities valued in best friends

Personal characteristics such as honesty, kindness, and trustworthiness counted most for both male and female students as the qualities they valued in their best friends. Girls (21%) and, to a lesser extent, boys (15%) also valued having close friends who were supportive (were "there for them") and were good listeners. Shared values and interests were more important characteristics listed by boys (14%) than girls (8%). Both males (10%) and females (9%) said they appreciated their best friends' sense of humor and fun.

Arguments and critiques

Even close friends typically argue a lot during adolescence, although 19% (no gender differences) of the youth poll respondents said they didn't. Of those who admitted to arguing, the "opposite sex" was the most frequent sore point (for 11% of the girls, and 9% of the boys). Girls (8%) also argued more about other friends than did boys (1%). About one in seven boys (13%) argued about sports with his closest friends; this topic was barely mentioned by girls (<1%).

When asked what one thing they would change about closest friends if they could, the most frequent response was "nothing" (26% for girls, 31% for boys). Their friends' attitudes—particularly negative attitudes—were singled out by 15% of the girls and 13% of the boys. More girls (15%) than boys (7%) said they would change personal characteristics of their friends.

The young people were a bit harder on themselves. When asked what one thing they would change about themselves if they could, only 9% of the girls and 16% of the boys said "nothing." One in four girls and one in seven boys would change a personal characteristic such as shyness or lack of self-confidence. Their own appearance and clothing were also mentioned frequently (by 16% of the girls and 14% of the boys). Others (11% of the girls and 9% of the boys) would change their own attitudes. One in ten girls (10%) would like to raise her self-esteem. This change was mentioned by only 3% of the boys.

Friendships of state juvenile facility residents

The peer relationships of young offenders, particularly when they involve gang activity, are receiving increased attention in the media and among youthworkers seeking to intervene in their lives. In most respects, the young men polled at the state juvenile facility were very like their peers "on the outside." There were some differences in the reported friendship patterns of the young men confined in the juvenile facility. Because these differences offer some insights into their social lives, we have summarized this information separately. In using the acronym "SJF" it was not our intent to label these young men, but to provide a "short-hand" means of reminding readers about whom we were writing.

The patterns of "best" friendship reported by the young men at the state juvenile facility (SJF) differed in several ways from those reported by the other boys (Figure 1). Half (50%) reported that their best friends were male, and 41% that their best friends were female. SJF respondents were nearly three times as likely (29%) to identify their female best friends as "steady girlfriends" than respondents not confined (10%).

The duration of friendships among SJF respondents was the same as those of the other boys—5 years, but SJF boys were more than twice as likely (19% vs. 9%) to have met their best friends in their neighborhoods. School was less important (34% for SJF boys vs. 45% for the others) as a setting for friendship formation.

The significance placed on personal qualities of best friends did not differ among the two groups of boys. Shared interests and values were more important to the SJF residents (19%) than the others (12%). A sense of humor was less important (4% vs. 12% for the other boys) as was being supportive and "being there" when needed (6% of SJF boys vs. 15% of the others).

SJF respondents were about equally likely as other boys to claim that they didn't argue with their best friends, but when indicating a source of contention, they were far more likely (25% vs. 9%) to report that they argued about girls. SJF residents also reported other friends as a source of conflict more often (9% vs. 1%).

When asked what they would change about their closest friends, 44% of the SJF students said nothing. About one in ten would change a personal characteristic, and another one in ten would change a friend's attitude. The SJF residents were not as harsh on themselves as the other male respondents; 21% would change nothing about themselves. Only 9% would change their appearance or clothing. The SJF boys were more likely, however, to report wanting to change one of their own personal characteristics (25%) or their own attitudes (18%) than the other boys (14% and 9%, respectively).

Qualities of a friend of the same sex

Groups of students were asked to discuss the qualities that they would look for in a friend of the same sex (Table 2). Personal traits dominated lists produced by the 133 groups responding to the question. Trustworthiness (52%), honesty (48%), and kindness and caring (36%) were mentioned most frequently, followed by shared interests (32%) and being a good listener (24%). Having a sense of humor (23%), a good personality (21%), and being "fun" (20%) were also desired characteristics of a same-sex friend. The following are typical group responses:

> ***"Loyalty, understanding, good listening, honesty, sensitivity, intelligence, positive self-image."***

> ***"Funny, honest, same interests, personality, flexible, trustworthy, understanding."***

> ***"To be able to listen and not talk about me, to be there for me, someone who will listen to me, trustworthy."***

One group's response presents a poignant reflection of these respondents' growing understanding of the risks and commitment involved in mutually shared relationships:

"Being able to talk about anything, open, honest, can keep secrets. They like you because of what you are; they don't want you to change. Someone who can give you advice. Look for friends with similar morals. They have to be fun; we have to have fun together. They don't laugh at you, they laugh with you. You can tell them embarrassing things. You can talk about personal things."

Qualities of a friend of the opposite sex

Students looked for many of the same characteristics in a friend of the opposite sex that they sought in a same-sex friend. Trustworthiness, honesty, and kindness and caring appeared on about three in ten lists (Table 2). Shared interests and being a good listener were not as important for an opposite-sex friend as for one of the same sex. Appearance was barely mentioned on the lists of characteristics sought in a same-sex friend (3%), but appeared on 40% of the lists of characteristics sought in opposite-sex friendships.

Table 2. Qualities Desired in a Friend

	Of Same Sex %	Of Opposite Sex %
Trustworthiness	52	32
Honesty	48	29
Kindness/caring	36	29
Shared interests	32	14
Good listener	24	16
Sense of humor	23	23
Good personality	21	24
Fun	20	18
Loyalty	16	11
Positive attitude/happy	16	9
Understanding	15	12
Appearance	3	40
Total number of groups responding	133	136

Notes: Percentage of groups mentioning quality.
Totals do not equal 100% because multiple responses were tabulated.

In most lists, appearance was simply an add-on to the characteristics desired in a same-sex friend:

"Sincere, good looking, loyal, honest."

"Sense of humor, honesty, friendliness, cheerfulness, optimism, loyalty, good looks."

"Good looks, personality, outgoing with everyone, honesty, attitude."

One group, composed of both males and females summed up their feelings about opposite-sex friendships:

"Someone I can talk [to], he's always there for moral support. Someone who knows me and my family very well; he's not afraid to spend time with my family. He doesn't care what my boyfriend's friends think. Loves me the way I am; should be protective and have a good sense of humor. Should like to go out and have a good time. She has to show interest in me, likes to flirt, must be intelligent, has to be warm, funny, caring, and not make demands on me that I can't deal with."

The lists of desired characteristics in young women produced by groups of young men of the state juvenile facility were considerably shorter than most others. Two characteristics predominated: appearance and willingness to have sex.

Why friendships break up

David Elkind notes: "In many respects moving from the culture of childhood to the culture of adolescence is like moving from one society to another; and the change in behavior and conduct the adolescent encounters can lead to a form of shock—peer shock."[5]

Peer shock takes a variety of forms. *Exclusion* is felt when young people suddenly feel the impact of the sorting process that is a part of the structure of adolescent social relationships. Prejudice, family social status, appearance, and a multiplicity of other characteristics can become grounds for being left out. Another shock, the shock of *betrayal*, occurs when a young person discovers that "while he or she was operating according to one set of frame rules, the free and honest sharing of information, the other person was operating strategically, obtaining, concealing, or conveying information for personal advantage."[6] The shock of *disillusion* is often related to romantic attachments. The discovery that affection or values and standards are not shared, or that parents or friends do not share liking for the boy- or girlfriend can lead to disillusionment. First sexual encounters can lead to multiple forms of peer shock. These themes flow through the descriptions of why friendships break up:

"Broken trust, having to choose between friends, loss of interest, putting things before friends, drug and alcohol abuse, parents."

"Backstabbing, lying, interests change. Make friendship, not romance. Three friends but two don't get along."

"Lack of respect, not being honest, not being trustworthy, outside influence, maturity (growing up), misunderstanding, hormones (opposite sex, relationships)."

"People change, betray each other, don't accept changes, drugs, alcohol, sex, racism."

"Grow apart, views differ. Spend too much time together and get annoyed with each other. They (or you) find different groups of friends or they find a boyfriend/girlfriend. You get to know them better and find out you're really not compatible."

"People aren't who you thought they were, not trusting, and fake."

Unforgivables

We went on to ask the students: "What would be the hardest thing for you to forgive, if a friend did it?" The theme of disillusion flows through their responses. Sleeping with or messing with a girl- or boyfriend, mentioned by 47% of the groups responding, tops the lists of unforgivables:

"Slept with boyfriend, told everyone your secrets."

"Screw my old lady."

"If she slept with my boyfriend. If somehow he broke up me and my boyfriend because of jealousy. If he or she continually misleads and lies to me."

"If she went out with my boyfriend. If they were two-faced, or if its your boyfriend and he cheated on you."

Lying (33%), betrayal or backstabbing (28%), telling secrets or otherwise breaking a trust (21%), spreading rumors or talking behind one's back (17%), and "put downs" or other mistreatment (9%) were other frequent behaviors that could not be forgiven. In a surprising and sad reflection of the fears of many teens, 13% of the groups included killing or injuring a friend or family member on their lists. For some of these young people, their fears may be based on the realities of the neighborhoods and communities in which they live.

The same peer-shock themes ran through the responses to the question: "What kind of person would you not want as a friend?" Liars were most loathed; this category appeared on 20% of the lists. Drug and/or alcohol abusers received the same number of nominations (19%) as two-faced backstabbers (19%), followed by cheaters (15%), conceited braggarts (16%), the untrustworthy (13%), and arrogant snobs (11%). Responses included:

"Two-faced, not trustworthy, obsession with other sex, drug/alcohol users, someone without same values."

"A drug/alcohol user, prejudiced person, someone who uses you for your money, someone who is racist, type of person who flaunts their money, a drug dealer, someone who isn't trustworthy."

"Selfish—abuses laws, someone who does anything to be accepted or get attention, has no morals, has no goals, cheats in school, cheats in life."

"Lies, troublemaker, stuck-up snot."

"A drug addict. Someone I couldn't behave with (I'd get in trouble with). An alcoholic or a big drinker. Someone I couldn't trust. Someone 2-faced or fake. Someone with a really bad past, like a prison term, and they don't seem to have changed."

As noted earlier, research has found that young people's relationships with peers change as they mature. We wondered if the Hoosier students responding to the youth poll were conscious of any changes over time in the basis of their friendships. We asked: "Think back to when you were in junior high school. Did you choose your friends differently then than you do now?" More than a fourth (27%) of the groups said that there had been no change, many adding that they still had the same friends. Others responded that they felt junior high friendships had been more immature, based on popularity, appearance, and being part of a leading crowd. They felt that their current friendships accepted people for what they are, and were based on "inner" qualities:

"When you're younger, you don't know how to pick your friends and all you think about is popularity. When you're younger, your morals and ethics are different from when you're older. In junior high, materialistic things meant more to me than they do now."

"Very superficially based in junior high. More on looks, clothes, popularity, etc. In high school you choose friends more by values, personality, etc."

"In junior high you try to get in with the coolest group; [now we] look for the "smartest" group instead of the coolest group."

"More mature now. We are more open-minded to opinions of others."

"[We] do not worry about looks; you're more of an individual in high school than in Jr. High."

"[Friendships are] more mature, not as shallow, not as self-centered; care more about what I think instead of what others think."

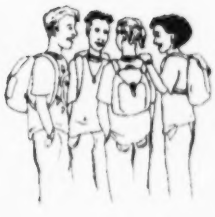
CHAPTER 2

PEER GROUPS

Young people who conform to the developmental norms of their age groups typically have the social skills needed to make and sustain friendships and have relatively large and quite diverse numbers of peers with whom they are on friendly terms. Between these broader undefined groups of compatible young people and their small circles of closest companions, most adolescents have a group of 8 to 15 friends with whom they "hang out." Although these groups are informally organized, they do have boundaries, that is, they have members who can be named and members will know who is "in" or "out" at any given time. Depending on one's perspective, these groups will be defined as a "clique," a "gang," or simply a "group of friends" who enjoy each other's company.

In early adolescence, such peer groups tend to be single-sex; by mid-adolescence, most have become "co-ed." One study of the ways in which adolescents spend time found that a fourth of the nonsleeping hours of 75 Chicago area high-school students was spent with friends. About 13% of their time was spent interacting with one friend, and another 14% of their time was spent with groups of friends. About 19% of their time was spent with parents and other family members, and an additional 2% of time was spent with friends and family together.[7]

The methodology for ascertaining time use by students responding to the youth poll was not nearly as precise as in the Chicago study, but the results are similar. Girls reported spending about 17% of their time with family members (an average of 19 hours per week). Boys reported spending about 19% of their time with family members (21 hours weekly). As found in the Chicago study, Hoosier teens reported more time spent with friends than with families. Girls spent about 20% of their time (an average of 22 hours weekly), and boys about 21% of their time (23 hours weekly) with friends.



The reports of the young men in the state juvenile facility differed markedly from the reports of other males participating in the youth poll. Residents were asked to respond according to the ways they spent their time prior to incarceration. They reported spending 27% of their time (30 hours weekly) with families and 52% (58 hours weekly) with friends. Some of the difference may be accounted for by wishful exaggeration, but the pattern is consistent with differences reported earlier. School (and probably also work) settings, where other students "on

the outside" spend most of the balance of their time, play a lesser role for the young men who end up in the state juvenile facility.

Robert Havighurst, one of the first social scientists to study the "baby boomers" as they moved into their teen years, outlined what he called the "developmental tasks" of adolescence (See box). Several of these tasks relate to the present discussion of peer relationships. As young people move away from emotional dependence on their parents, relationships with peers increase in importance. Maintaining peer relationships consumes much of their time, but friendships with other young people are crucial as a foundation for getting on in the adult world. Peer groups help young people refine social and interpersonal skills and clarify their own values and moral standards. Young people also learn to balance leadership and followership, to manage aggression and to extend and receive support for social and emotional needs from people of all ages. Peer groups may place pressure for conformity on members, but, just as importantly, they provide a backdrop against which members can define their individuality.

The Developmental Tasks of Adolescence[8]

The adolescent must:

1. Adjust to a new body image.
2. Adapt to increased cognitive powers.
3. Adjust to increased cognitive demands in school.
4. Expand his or her verbal repertoire.
5. Develop a personal sense of identity.
6. Establish adult vocational goals.
7. Establish emotional and psychological independence from his parents.
8. Develop stable and productive peer relationships, including heterosexual relationships.
9. Learn to manage his or her own sexuality.
10. Adopt an effective value system.
11. Develop increased impulse control, or behavioral maturity.

Friendship groups can serve as "comfort zones" for developing tastes and styles as well as for sorting out the many conflicts and complexities of daily life. When more than 2,000 Hoosier high-school students responded to the Indiana Student Health Survey in 1991, half of the seniors and 48% of the 9th-graders said that they felt best about themselves when in a

group of one or two friends. Fifteen percent of the 9th-graders and 14% of the 12th-graders felt best about themselves in a group or gang setting. Only 13% of the 9th-graders and 11% of the 12th-graders felt best about themselves at home or in the presence of family members.[9]

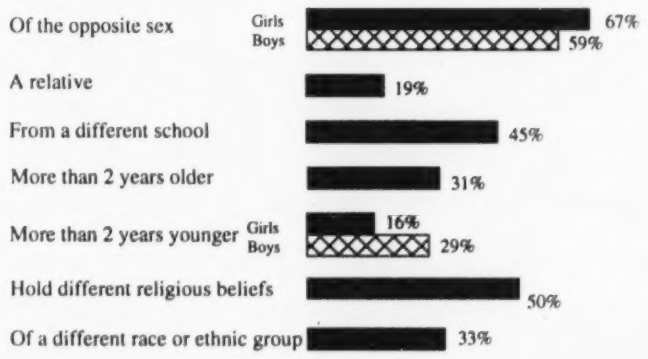
Groups of friends

This youth poll also explored the presence and meaning of friendship groups in the social life of Hoosier high-school students. More than 8 in 10 young people reported having a group of friends with whom they hung out; there were no gender differences. Slightly more white students (89%) than African-Americans (80%) and students of other races (86%) reported being members of peer groups. School was identified as the most important context for forming friendship groups, particularly for girls (63% vs. 53% for boys). As was true for forming their close friendships, young men in the state juvenile facility had relied less on school settings (38%) than the non-SJF boys, and were more dependent on their neighborhoods (24% vs. 5% for non-SJF boys) for forming the groups of peers with whom they hung out regularly.

Reports of the size of friendship groups varied from two to more than 20. The average size of their groups was 12 to 13, reported by both males and females. As noted earlier, by mid-adolescence, young people are likely to have sorted themselves using a variety of criteria. We were interested in the diversity/homogeneity continuum of Hoosier teens' peer groups. Most of them—67% of the girls and 59% of the boys—reported being in groups that were co-ed. We also asked youth poll respondents about other forms of diversity (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Reported Diversity of Peer Group Memberships

Percentage of students reporting at least one member of their main peer group who was



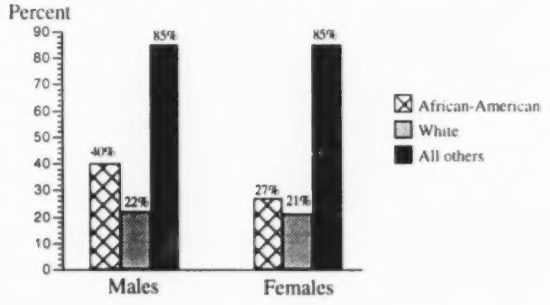
Note: Does not include residents of state juvenile facility.

Very few students (19%) reported having relatives in their peer groups, but 45% of the groups included young people from another school. Groups were fairly homogeneous in age; fewer than a third (31%) of the students reported group members more than two years older. Boys were more likely (29%) than girls (16%) to report that their groups had members more than 2 years younger. Half of the students said that members of their groups held different religious beliefs.

Racial and ethnic diversity

Only a third of the groups described had members who were of a race or ethnic group different from that of the respondent. This proportion was essentially the same for males and females, but differed according to the ethnicity of the respondent (Figure 3). Only about one in five white students (22% of the males and 21% of the females) reported any ethnic diversity in their main peer groups. Ethnic diversity was present in the peer groups of more African-American males (40%) than females (27%). The peer groups of multi-ethnic young people or those from ethnic groups that are very small in Indiana were most likely (85%) to include students of different ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 3. Students reporting one or more persons of a different race in their friendship groups



Note: Includes state juvenile facility residents.

In another section of the youth poll, we asked young people to agree or disagree with the statement: "I have been put down by other students because of my race or ethnic group." Nearly four in ten (38%) of the African-American respondents agreed with this statement, as did more than half (51%) of the multi-ethnic students or those from "other" ethnic backgrounds. Only

13% of the white students agreed with the statement (Figure 4). We did not ask the students when they had experienced such "verbal violence."[10] We did discuss the issue with members of the IYI Youth Advisory Council, however. They agreed that whenever putdowns occurred, they would be undoubtedly painful and, for many, serve to undermine the trust necessary for close inter-racial or inter-cultural friendships.

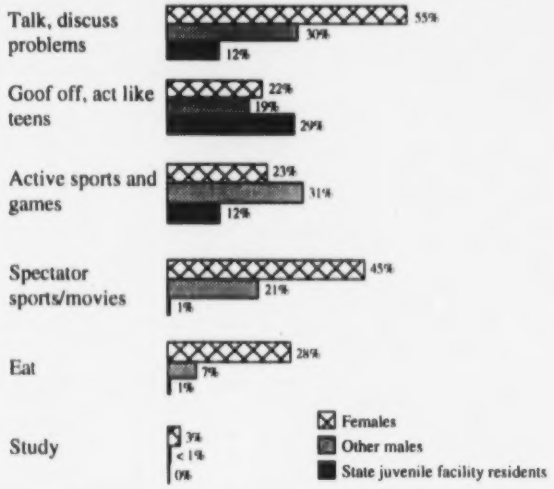
Figure 4. Students who agreed with the statement: *"I have been put down by other students because of my race or ethnic group."*

Notes: Includes residents of state juvenile facility.
"All others" includes Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, and those who designated themselves as "other" or of more than one ethnic group.

What groups do when together

Much of the time spent in groups is devoted just to talking and discussing problems (Figure 5). More than half (55%) of the girls and 30% of the boys reported that their groups spent time this way. Only 12% of the SJF residents reported this activity. Another favored part of hanging out with peers is just "goofing off" and "acting like teens." About two in ten girls

Figure 5. What Students Say Groups Do When Together



Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were tabulated.

(22%) and boys (19%) reported this as a group activity, while it was reported by nearly three in ten (29%) of the SJF residents. Active sports were an activity for 23% of the girls' groups and for 31% of the boys' groups. This activity was not as prominent among the ways SJF residents spent their group time; only 12% reported spending time in active sports participation. More than twice as many girls reported attending movies and spectator sports as did the boys (45% vs. 21%). Only 1% of the SJF residents reported going to movies and spectator sports. Eating was reported as an activity by 28% of the girls, but only 7% of the boys (and about 1% of the SJF residents). We expect that the differences in activity reported by the two groups of boys may reflect factors such as cost and accessibility as well as preference. Studying together was not a particularly prominent peer group activity, reported by only 3% of the girls and fewer than 1% of the boys. None of the SJF residents reported studying with peers.

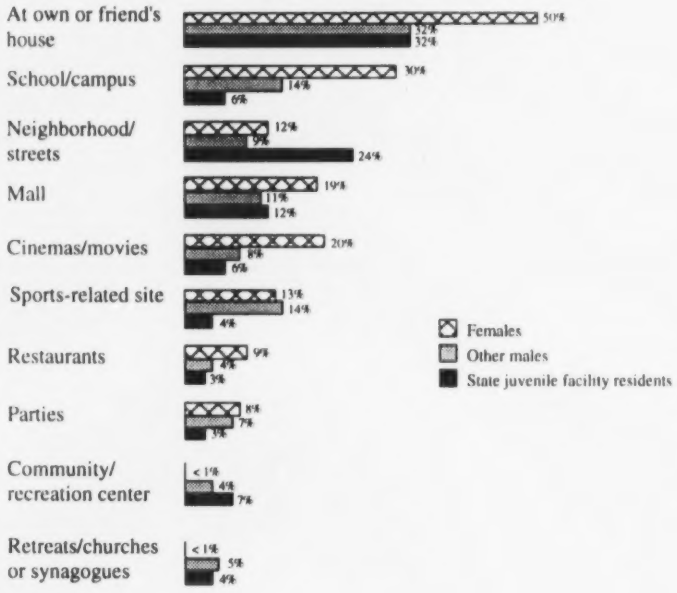
The group questionnaire also asked respondents to discuss the types of things they did when they were with their friends. For girls and boys "on the outside," reported activities followed much the same patterns as recorded in the individual responses. Just hanging out and talking, active sports participation, going to movies and concerts, shopping, dating and partying were prominent activities listed. SJF residents reported a diversity of group activities when responding to the individual questionnaires. Their responses to the group questionnaire suggest that respondents felt a need to affirm their toughness. The 13 groups reporting were more likely to focus on negative behaviors: getting drunk or high (3 groups); vandalism, robbery, and other illegal activity (5 groups); and sex (4 groups). Nearly three-fourths (74%) of the groups of students "on the outside" mentioned just talking or hanging out, or "cruising" as group activities. Only 5 of the 13 groups (38%) of SJF residents mentioned just hanging out or "cruising," and none of them singled out just talking as something they did.

Where peers hang out together

The choices of location for being together generally relate closely to the activities reported above (Figure 6). Half of the girls reported spending time at their own or friends' homes, and nearly a third (32%) of the boys did also. Girls were more than twice as likely as boys (30% vs. 14%) to report spending time with peers at school. SJF residents (6%) were less than half as likely as other boys to report spending time with friends at school. On the other hand, SJF residents were far more likely (24%) to report spending time with friends out on "the streets"

or in their neighborhoods than the other boys (9%) and the girls (12%). Malls and cinemas are more likely to be favored by girls' groups than boys. Differences in use of other sites are small. A pattern consistent with reported activities emerges among the responses of the SJF residents, however. They are more oriented to their neighborhoods than to schools, and are less likely to report hanging out in sites where activities are more or less structured and/or supervised and where participation costs money (cinemas, sports-related sites, and restaurants). They do report more use of community and recreation centers. Apart from school, we believe that these patterns reflect difference in access. Many of these young men come from families with few financial resources to spend on any type of recreation.

Figure 6. Where Groups Go To Be Together



Inexpensive ways groups have fun

We also asked students responding to the group questionnaire about their ideas of inexpensive ways to have fun together. Among the inexpensive activities, just hanging out or talking, going to the dollar movies, partying and listening to music, playing sports, eating out, watching TV, renting movies, and playing arcade video games were mentioned most often. Lack of transportation during evening hours makes it impossible for many young people to enjoy some of these pastimes.

Illegal activities

Despite public perceptions that young people in groups often lead each other astray, only seven of the "outside" groups (6%) mentioned illegal activities such as getting drunk, vandalism or "toilet-papering" a house. Eight of the 13 groups (62%) of SJF residents mentioned illegal activities—using drugs or alcohol, vandalism, stealing cars, and gang-banging.

Other research suggests that illegal activity among Hoosier high-school students is probably considerably higher than reported by the youth poll participants. In responding to the Indiana Student Health Survey, for example, 25% of the 9th-graders and 35% of the 12th-grade students reported heavy drinking (5 or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours) in the month prior to the survey. Eight percent of the 9th-graders and 20% of the 12th-graders also reported driving a vehicle when they had been drinking. It was disturbing to find that 29% of Hoosier 9th-graders, and 24% of 12th-graders reported having carried a weapon in the month before the study.

Special occasions

When asked what constituted a "really special" group activity, students identified a variety of things—most of which could require a considerable outlay of money. Proms and other dances, going to concerts, fairs or festivals, graduation and other school-related events were most often mentioned. Celebrations of birthdays and holidays were also mentioned frequently. Typical lists included:

"Christmas, dances, birthdays, anniversary with opposite sex."

"Sit down dinner with a waitress or waiter, wedding, birthday and Christmas, school dances, graduation, when someone moves away."

"Basketball game, graduation, or celebration of some award, going on vacation."

"Expos, Circle City Classic, parties, sex."

"Prom, get a job, birthdays, Christmas break, homecoming, baby showers."

Not all these shared "special" occasions were happy ones:

"Concert, get drunk, one girl and four guys, marriage, death."

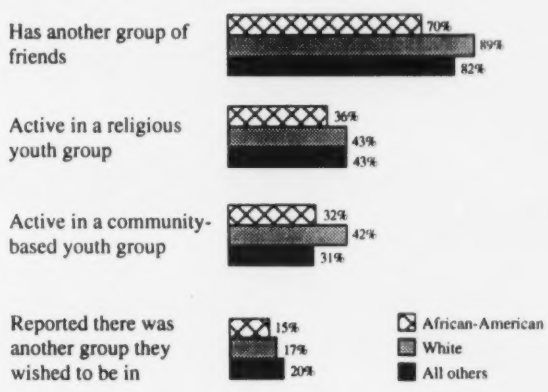
"Birthdays, New Year's, Christmas, prom, remembering a death of a loved one."

"Prom, someone getting out of the fuckhouse, homey gets hurt."

Other groups

Through the individual questionnaires, students were asked about membership in groups other than the special groups of friends they had described as the ones with whom they most often "hung out" (Figure 7). A majority of the students reported having additional groups of friends and that they kept up with them by "being with them," "dividing time equally," and going out with them on weekends. Others mentioned talking on the phone and correspondence as ways to keep up. African-American respondents were slightly less likely to mention having additional groups of friends beyond those they hung out with regularly. Fewer than half of the students responding to the youth poll reported membership in religious youth groups and community-based youth organizations. Ethnic differences were small in reported active participation in such groups.

Figure 7. Membership in Other Groups



Note: Includes state juvenile facility residents.

On the outside looking in

We also asked the students if there were a group in school that they would like to be in, but were not (Figure 7). Most students answered "No" to this question. Of those that aspired to membership in another group, the reasons they felt kept out varied. The most frequent explanations were their own shyness or "looks," or not having enough time. Many of their comments reflected the "peer shock" of exclusion:

"[I] don't live in the 'right' part of town."

"Low self-esteem keeps me from socializing."

"[I'm] not pretty and mature."

"...because of what I call blind racism."

"They don't know me and don't want to let other people in."

"I don't drink."

Friends and families

In the 1960s James Coleman set forth ideas that had a long-term impact on the way in which adults viewed adolescents. Coleman felt that young people had become so isolated from adults that they formed what amounted to a separate "adolescent society" that demanded conformity to its own set of styles, language, and behavioral codes—many of which ran counter to those of adults.[11] Although these beliefs linger on in the popular view of adolescents, the body of research that followed has generally laid these ideas of adolescent isolation to rest—at least in the extreme form that Coleman proposed. There are ups and downs in relationships with parents, for example, but many researchers have found that young people are very likely to share their parents' values and to seek parental guidance on important decisions.

With that said, however, the company that adolescents keep is sometimes a source of conflict with parents. We wondered how the parents and friends of youth poll participants got along. Most students (69%) reported that their families liked their friends; ethnic group differences were small. Not surprisingly, parents were reported to favor friends who behaved well, were "nice," and responsible. Parents disliked friends whom they felt were "a bad influence," had poor manners, otherwise behaved badly, or were irresponsible.

Most of the students who took part in the youth poll (73%) also said that their closest friends felt comfortable coming over to their homes to hang out. Laid back, welcoming, and comfortable parents who got along with each other made friends feel at home. On the other hand, parents who set too many strict rules or were threatening made friends feel uncomfortable.

CHAPTER 3

HIGH-SCHOOL HIERARCHIES

Most researchers and youth development specialists have relegated the "adolescent society" as Coleman defined it to the status of a myth about being young and American. These ideas about young people do linger on in the minds of many adults who find it difficult to see past the distinctive fashions and vocabulary of the young. It does remain true, however, that a great deal of the experience of *being* adolescent takes place in settings where they are in the majority. Chief among these are the high schools.

Hoosier high schools vary widely in size, in grade configuration, in degree of ethnic and cultural integration, and in resources available to support the curriculum, student services, and extracurricular activities. However else they may vary, high schools are alike in being complex social hierarchies based on academic programs and classes, as well as student clubs, groups, cliques, and gangs. Students create the mosaics that represent the social structure of their schools from an assortment of individual traits.

We were interested in the criteria students use to define social success in their high schools and used the following technique to find out respondents' perceptions of the relative importance placed on various individual traits:

> **Picture a supermarket where the groceries are not vegetables and frozen TV dinners but personality traits and abilities. We are giving you $100 to stock up on what is most important to social success *in your high school.* You must spend all your money, but spend your cash with care. Spend a lot on things that are most important and none at all on those that don't matter in your school. Whatever you do, make sure your total adds up to $100 before you move on to the next question.**

Averages of the dollar values assigned to each of the traits were used to create an overall ranking of their relative importance for social success (Table 3). Gender differences in rankings were small. A good personality and attitude were considered most important by both male and female students. Religion, a student's race or ethnic group, or neighborhood affiliations were ranked as least important. The rank order of traits assigned by

state juvenile facility residents showed several differences: good looks were perceived as most important, but attitude moved to seventh place. Neighborhood affiliation, least important for students "on the outside," ranked fifth among the traits perceived as important by SJF residents.

Table 3. Rank Order of Traits Considered Necessary for Social Success
(Average $ Values Students Would be Willing to Pay in Parentheses)

	Females Rank	Males Rank	State Juvenile Facility Rank
Good personality	1 ($23)	1 ($21)	2 ($18)
Attitude	2 ($18)	2 ($16)	7 ($13)
Good looks	3 ($17)	4 ($15)	1 ($20)
How smart	4 ($13)	3 ($15)	3 ($17)
Athletic ability	5 ($13)	5 ($15)	4 ($16)
Money family has	6 ($13)	6 ($12)	6 ($14)
Religion	7 ($12)	8 ($12)	8 ($12)
Race/ethnic group	8 ($10)	7 ($12)	9 ($12)
Neighborhood group	9 ($9)	9 ($9)	5 ($15)

Note: Traits were ranked prior to rounding dollar values.

The high-school social ladder

Students use various permutations and combinations of these traits to develop a diverse set of labels that can be used to summarize a student's image and designate, almost instantly, her or his position in a school's hierarchy. We were interested in some of the dynamics of this hierarchy and asked: "In a lot of high schools, students sort themselves into categories based on their image or reputation. Does this happen in your school?" Only 7% of the responding students said "No," or didn't know. Combining all group responses yielded a list of more than 70 labels used in their schools. The terms that appeared most frequently are included in Table 4.

For the most part, terms of popularity and unpopularity follow the hierarchy of traits related to social success discussed earlier. "Jocks" and "preps" are the most commonly used labels to designate students at the top. These terms describe young people with good personalities and who fit school standards of good looks and dress. They are often, but not exclusively, athletes. They get good grades, but do not stand out in academic performance. Intellectuals and musicians good enough to be in school bands ("band people") are scorned in many schools. "Nerds"—young people lacking social and interpersonal skills

valued in the peer culture—are also disdained. Young people whose behaviors push them to the legal fringe and beyond ("druggies," "hoods," "scums") are at the bottom of many social ladders, although in some schools, "druggies" apparently make it to the top.[12] We did not question young people on the reasons why the social status of "druggies" might be so variable.

Table 4. Labels Used for Most and Least Popular Students

	Designated *Most* Popular Students No. of Groups	Designated *Least* Popular Students No. of Groups
Jocks	60	1
Preps	37	3
Wealthy	8	—
Good lookers/dressers	7	—
Popular/active ones	7	—
Intellectuals	6	11
Druggies	4	9
Band people	1	9
Hoods	1	17
Scums/scuds	—	12
Nerds	—	32

Note: Only categories named by more than five of the 128 groups responding to the question are listed here.

The youth poll did not ask respondents about their perceptions of the roles that teachers, counselors, and administrators play in curtailing or encouraging student social hierarchies. Several IYI Youth Advisory Council members expressed the view that adult school personnel, perhaps unwittingly, reinforced existing peer structures by favoring students on top, and ignoring or even belittling those at the bottom of the social ladder. The council members also talked about "some" teachers who seemed to base their expectations of academic success or failure on a student's social position. When asked, however, they all could describe other adults at their schools who put great effort into drawing out shy students, or long hours into helping students sort out relationship problems. School personnel need to remain aware of the fragility of student social life and the potential impact of their own attitudes and actions in sustaining the negative effects of student hierarchies.

Changing reputations

Intervention programs designed to help improve attitudes, behaviors, and/or social skills seem to be run on the tacit as-

sumption that if a young person wants to change and does, he or she will receive better acceptance among peers. The first Indiana youth poll examined students' perceptions of high-school life. Although peer relationships were not specifically a subject of inquiry in that poll, the students' responses revealed some disturbingly negative attitudes toward young people who had dropped out, but who might wish to return to school.[13] Many comments left the impression that once a given student's reputation was established, it remained fairly fixed in the eyes of other students. Several respondents to that poll expressed reluctance to accept changes in a returning student as genuine, and placed the onus for "proving themselves" on him or her. We wished to explore this aspect of peer relationships in more detail with the students responding to the current poll.

Groups were asked to discuss the question: "If a student wanted to change his or her image in your school, would it be possible? Why or why not?" A fourth of the groups said flat out, that changing an image would not be possible. About two-thirds of the groups said that it would be possible for a student to change her or his image, but, of these, more than half commented on how difficult it would be. Many of the responses confirmed some of our earlier suspicions about the relative rigidity of high-school social life:

> ***"It would be very difficult. The lines of the clicks [sic] are too strong, and when you go to high school you're prejudged."***
>
> ***"Yes, because in some schools if you want to change, they give you a chance."***
>
> ***"It would take about 4 years—not at all unless you changed completely."***
>
> ***"No, because once you foul up it's the end."***
>
> ***"It's easier to make small changes than changes from something like nerd to jock."***
>
> ***"Can't unless you move."***
>
> ***"No, they would say you were a wanna be."***
>
> ***"5 years are needed to change image—if you put your mind to it, get in with the right people, if people give them a chance."***
>
> ***"Yes, he could get in a gang."***
>
> ***"People can change [their] image because people just change, attitudes change, times change, sometimes people move."***

Some groups suggested that the size of the school would make a difference:

"Yes, over summer and in large schools people can become lost in the crowd. No, [in a] small school, hard to change."

"No. School is too small; first impressions stick."

"No. It would not be possible because at this small school we all know each other too well."

We went on to ask the students whether changing one's image would be harder for boys or for girls. About 14% of the groups of students concurred that changing an image would be equally difficult for boys and girls, and another 4% disagreed among themselves. Many comments recognized the double standards applied to the behavior of girls and boys, and most groups (71%) agreed that it would be harder for a girl to change her reputation than for a boy:

Harder for girls "because its supposedly 'OK' for guys to sleep around but not for girls."

"Harder for girls; their reputation tends to be permanent."

"We figure that it is harder for girls because of the sexist stereotype of studs (girls as sluts/whores)."

Harder for girls: "men look to women for guidance and when they mess up, their image is messed up."

"It would be harder for girls because once they do something it's never forgotten."

"Girls are more jealous and dwell on the past."

A much smaller number of groups (12%) felt that change would be harder for boys:

"It would be harder for guys because we're more stubborn."

"Harder for guys because they aren't usually as close with other guys as girls are, so they don't have the same 'support'."

"Boys. Once they have [an] image it's really hard to make other people see them as someone else."

The members of one group summed up the opinions of many when they said:

"You can work your way down the ladder, but not up the ladder. [You are] afraid that if you are seen with that person, then you will fall in status. Harder for girls; my school has cliques and they don't want to add new people. Guys move around."

One other question related to reputations in school. We asked: "If someone in your school started going around with the wrong crowd, what could you do?" About half of the groups responding indicated a willingness to try to intervene—mostly through talking to the straying student:

"Talk to them and see if there's a reason why; invite them to other activities (positive activities)."

"Tell them to stop—no wrong crowd—include them in your activities."

"Mind your own business or if it's a good friend, talk to them about it."

Several groups expressed some ambivalence about getting involved, while for others taking any action would depend on whether the student heading for trouble was a friend or not:

"Let them learn from their mistakes. Try not to run others' lives; be their friend."

"What's the wrong crowd? Who are you to say who is 'right' and 'wrong'."

"If it was a friend, ask them what's going on and why they are doing that, but if it's not, then we wouldn't worry about it."

"Ignore them; not even care as long as they're not a friend to you."

About a fourth of the groups would do nothing at all:

"You can't do a thing about it."

"Nothing, and wouldn't give a second thought."

"You can't change them if they don't want to be changed."

"Nothing. It's their life. Who am I to say what's best for them."

"It's up to them. If they want to screw up their life let them. I have to worry about my own."

Cliques, groups of friends, and gangs

Many studies of high-school life have distinguished at least three fairly stable types of peer groups: cliques, groups of friends, and gangs. We were interested in learning whether young people themselves would see similar distinctions, and we found just that. Cliques were characterized by exclusivity, snobbishness, and concern with status, while friendship groups were viewed as more open and caring of members, and based on common interests and mutual liking. Gangs were most often described as self-serving, negative in their influence, and likely to engage in activities often characterized by violence.

"Gangs are thought of in negative terms. Cliques are based on your status and are less willing to accept new people. A group of friends is more open-minded to new people and ideas—they are also more caring."

"A clique is having to meet their standards. A group is a group of people that have common interests; anyone can be in. A gang is a violent clique."

"Gangs are negatives. Cliques denote social status and friends are people who hang together with no strings attached."

"A clique is snobbing and it's hard to get in ([they] ride people). A group of friends enjoy just hanging out and don't discriminate. A gang is dangerous and takes over your life."

"A clique is a group of people who stick together for popularity reasons—don't let others in—don't necessarily like each other. A group of friends are people who are close, share ideas and thoughts; they like each other. A gang is people who stick together for protection. No one else accepts them."

"A clique is a group of friends that you can't get in. A gang you can't get out of. Friends—they just have fun."

"Clique—people are in to look good. Group of friends—people who care for each other. Gang—out for destruction, to be cool."

We wondered if students considered cliques to be problems at their schools. About 60% of the groups said that cliques were indeed a problem, primarily because of their exclusivity:

"Yes, they are a problem at our schools. They dominate activities, influence voting, decisions, etc.; they hurt others' feelings."

"Yes, because people get left out and are isolated."

"Yes, because they only think of themselves and not others."

They're rich and white; they're problems when they get in the way or turn snitch."

"They are a problem because they don't promote unity and harmony within our class."

Most responses (72%) indicated that gangs were not a problem in their schools. For students who reported that gangs were a problem, difficulties arose because of the association of gangs with violence, drugs, vandalism, and theft, and the fear that members instilled:

"YES!! They have power to put fear in everyone."

"Not usually, but gangs can keep people from going certain places. They take money when they want to, take over bathrooms."

"Yes—always fights, racial tensions in a multicultural society."

"Violence makes school edgy."

Given that cliques and gangs are viewed negatively by most young people, we wondered why they thought students would want to join such groups. Their explanations were remarkably similar for the two types of groups. The most frequently given

reasons reflected the powerful needs of adolescents to affiliate with peers. Students join cliques:

> ***"To be accepted, not comfortable with self, to have friends."***
>
> ***"So they feel they are part of something."***
>
> ***"To become popular, belong (insecure)."***
>
> ***"To feel important and wanted and accepted."***

Students join gangs for many of the same reasons:

> ***"Because their priorities are screwed up; they're trying to get accepted and fit in somewhere."***
>
> ***"Students want to be in a gang for protection—gang is like a family."***
>
> ***"To be cool; to feel like they belong."***
>
> ***"To feel wanted and to be known."***
>
> ***[Because it is the] "masculine thing to do; protection; pressured to."***

The comments made by youth poll respondents about various forms of adolescent peer culture provide much food for thought. They also suggest that the social rigidities present in high schools are likely to undermine many attempts at intervention on behalf of students with poor peer relationships.

CHAPTER 4

GROUP INFLUENCES

The influence of friends has been a subject of interest since G. Stanley Hall's work first brought attention to the nation's adolescents.[14] Nearly a century later, many positive and negative aspects of peer group influence on attitudes and behaviors have been recognized, but much remains to be learned about the special roles that peer groups play during adolescence. Through their relationships with peers, young people learn to identify and debate social norms and values; they learn team work and skills in negotiating consensus. The peer group also forms an important backdrop against which to assess their own developing individuality. Savin-Williams and Berndt reported that the ultimate developmental outcome of close peer relations in adolescence should be "individuation, a feeling of being separate from and yet connected to others. One should discover in friendships one's own uniqueness."[15]

Peer groups and identity-formation

We were interested in knowing whether the young people responding to the youth poll could articulate the influences of peer groups on their lives. We asked the groups to discuss the question: "How do peer groups help you figure out who you are?" Many of their answers appeared to be straight out of the textbook:

"Introduce you to new experiences, more confident so you can be yourself."

There are all different kinds of people and you find where you fit in, who you like. They offer new ways to look at things."

"It's like a test, the understanding of others' thoughts."

"They help you find your identity and find values. You go through experiences with your friends that make you learn about yourself."

"When faced with peer pressure and decisions, the choices [you] make force you to realize who you are."

"They encourage you to do what you want and point out when you're lying to yourself."

"You must figure out on your own and not take on other people's ideas, traits, or personalities."

"Get to know yourself by knowing others.

"You develop the role you will play in all your relationships. [They] help you contact your inner self, bring out your characteristics."

Not all discussion groups agreed. About 13% of them felt that peer groups do not help you figure out who you are. They commented:

"They show you how they want you to be and that's not good."

"They don't; I find out on my own."

"They give you a false sense of identity."

Stifling individuality

We then explored the ways in which peer groups prevent students from expressing themselves as they would like. A larger proportion of the groups (22%) said that peer groups do not inhibit self-expression. Most respondents, however, saw the potentially stifling nature of peer groups:

"They can intimidate you. Sometimes they want you to conform to their ideas which makes it hard to express your own."

"They put pressure on you to be like them and they don't care how you are."

"They may encourage you to do something you don't like to yourself or others. They don't want you to fulfill your creativity."

"Worrying about fitting in and people accepting and liking you. People are so into themselves."

"If there's a dominant person in your group, you usually don't oppose them and you don't tell your feelings—you end up doing what others want."

"They make you feel like an ass."

"They stifle you if they don't like what you say or exclude you from the group."

"You have to go with the flow."

Positive peer pressures

We went on to explore both the positive and negative means that peer groups use to exert pressures on members through a series of questions near the end of the group questionnaire. Fewer than 5% of the groups discussing these issues said that peer groups do not apply pressure to members. Positive and negative pressures were described quite differently. Describing positive peer pressures, students pointed out the help that groups provided in making decisions and keeping people out of trouble:

"Encourage them to do the right things, to make good decisions, and to do something good."

"Keep them from doing harm to oneself, encourage them, befriend them, talk to them about problems in their life."

"If you want to do something harmful 2 yourself, they may gang up on you."

"They encourage you to do something you want to. They give self-confidence. They give you a feeling of belonging."

"Helping out in hard times."

"Encouraging, help stray group members. They have positive reinforcement."

"They reward you and when someone is feeling down, they cheer you up."

Several groups specifically mentioned the role that positive peer pressure plays in keeping young people away from drugs:

"They influence others not to smoke or drink, to find other ways to have a good time."

"If your group doesn't drink, do drugs, etc., then this will have positive effects on other members."

"Support. Steer you away from drugs."

"Prevent drinking, drugs, sleeping around."

Negative peer pressures

Drug and alcohol use was a prominent theme in 18% of the responses to the question: "How do groups use negative peer pressure on their members?"

"Encourage to drink and party."

"Offering drugs and alcohol and making you do things you don't like."

"Opposite of above. If your group drinks and does drugs, then the effects will be negative."

More than a third (37%) of the groups felt peers pushed people to do things against their will:

"Make them do something they don't want to; abuse trust within the group."

"Force them to make decisions that they don't want to make."

"Be pushy or manipulative."

Some groups viewed threats of exclusion as a tactic:

"Can make you feel stupid and they can exclude you."

"Put downs. Killer statements."

"Don't want to break out of the group so you do everything they do."

"Tell them they won't be their friends if they don't do what the group wants them to do."

"Make you feel guilty about not doing something."

"Use negative words and comments. Stereotype you."

"Cutting you down, and sometimes as a whole giving you a different attitude about things."

A small number of groups denied that negative peer pressure exists:

"If you're in the right group there won't be negative pressure."

"I don't think that negative peer pressure exists. If someone decides to do something it is their own choice."

Changing peer pressures

A number of studies have found younger adolescents to be more vulnerable to peer pressures than older teens and that group influence begins to abate by mid-adolescence. We wanted to know if Hoosier young people were conscious of any changes in peer influence and asked: "As you have grown older, have peer pressures increased or decreased? Why?" About 43% of the groups felt that peer pressures had decreased over time:

"Decreased—your values have grown stronger."

"Decreased because by the time you've grown you've developed your own personality."

"Decreased because we're more willing to think for ourselves, and it's not as important how our friends feel about it."

"Decreased. You have friends you trust when you are older."

"Decreased. Choose better friends. Don't really have peer pressure because we try to avoid it."

"It has decreased because we know how to deal with it."

More than half (51%) of the groups felt that peer pressures had increased because there were more decisions to be made:

"Increased. There is more available to be pressured by, make you feel like you have to."

"Increased because you become more cautious about what you wear and do."

"Increased. Things are just getting worse, a lot more decisions to make."

"Increased. More freedom of choice, more choices. Everyone has their own opinion [and] influences (home, school).

"Increased. It's getting wild out there."

A few groups saw things both ways:

"Increased because there are a lot more decisions I need to make now and some friends always try to influence. It has decreased for some because they know who they are and when some know what they want to do, they'll do it with or without the group."

"As I have grown older peer pressure has increased because as you get older there are more things that you can get pressured into doing. We also think it has decreased because your group of friends have developed by now and everyone in the group pretty much agrees on everything the same way."

"Peer pressure probably decreased but the responsibilities increase. Now we are more educated about the negative effects of peer pressure."

"Entering high school increases, leaving decreases."

"Hidden influences"

Making decisions has been a prominent theme throughout this exploration of peer relationships and influences. Adolescents generally have limited experience in making decisions, and clearly the young Hoosiers responding to the youth poll seek help (or get it whether they want it or not) from peers. The decisions that adolescents make run the gamut from relatively trivial (tastes in clothing or music) to crucial and life-changing (after high-school plans, whether or not to do drugs or have sex).

We asked individual respondents to rate the relative strength of four "hidden influences:" parents, friends, boy/girl friends, and their own judgment on a range of decisions. The question read:

Adults worry a lot about the influences on young people today. How important is your own judgment or what your parents, boy- or girlfriend, or friends think, when you make decisions...

Whatever the decision, students were most likely to report that their own judgment was "extremely important" (Table 5). Parents were more likely to be "extremely important" influences in all areas but clothing. Parental influence was applied most strongly to "important" decisions such as post-high-school plans and choice of a college, and to ethical decisions such as whether or not to cheat on a test, drink alcohol or do drugs. It

was interesting to find that fewer students reported what parents thought to be an "extremely important" influence on the decision to have sex or not. Not surprisingly, influence of a student's boy- or girlfriend increased in strength in the area of sexual behavior.

Table 5. Percentage of Students Reporting Influence is "Extremely Important" When Making Decisions

Decisions about:	Own Judgment %	Parents %	Friends %	Boy friend/ Girl friend %
Clothes	66	15	18	24
Music	66	13	12	10
Friends	77	33	30	23
Elective courses	70	42	9	10
College	78	52	12	18
Plans after high school	82	58	17	28
Extra-curricular activities	68	26	11	12
Plans for the summer	71	27	24	26
After-school job	61	30	9	13
Cheat on a test	72	50	18	21
Drink alcohol	77	58	30	36
Do drugs	80	63	38	41
Whether or not to have sex	66	47	25	42

Note: Percentages include state juvenile facility residents.

Reports of the influence of friends, overall the weakest among the four, was strongest in the areas of choosing other friends and in decisions about using alcohol and drugs. These reports of group influence were given "in the abstract." Responses to group questions about peer influences suggested that for many, peer pressures remain an important reality.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As is generally the case when young people are asked for their perspectives on life, the thoughts that they shared through this youth poll provide much to ponder. They confirmed for us the importance of friendships and peer groups in their struggles to develop a sense of self. They told us about social hierarchies and the labels they use to sort each other out. Themes of acceptance and exclusion ran through much of their commentary.

They also told us about the importance of reputations and confirmed the suspicions gained from an earlier youth poll that once a person's image is fixed, it is very difficult to change. As one astute reviewer of this report noted, "Probably the only thing that saves a lot of kids is graduation." He also commented about how different hierarchies look among alumni when they gather for 25th year class reunions!

The apparent rigidity of the high-school social system makes us wonder about the potential success of school-based counseling or program interventions designed to help young people gain social skills. Most programs tend to focus on "improving" individuals. Might efforts also be directed toward reducing the social barriers that are part of a school's peer culture? Or, would intervention efforts be more effective if conducted in nonschool settings such as church or community-based youth groups? One reviewer also questioned the role that community athletic and band "booster clubs" have in maintaining the social hierarchies within the schools. These are important questions to be answered by further research.

Finally, the young people who responded to this youth poll have affirmed again that growing up in today's world is not simple, and that easy access to drugs, alcohol, and sex in the peer culture greatly increases the complexity of their struggles to develop values and standards of their own.

This study, like most research, raised additional questions. In the section of the report that follows, we have included a few more of the questions that we wish we had asked the youth poll respondents. It is our hope that readers will use these questions as a springboard for discussions among young people and the adults who influence their lives.

NOTES

1. Table 1 describes the ethnicity and families of the participants in the youth poll. At the present time, there is considerable debate on the appropriateness of "forced choice" survey questions (e.g., on the U.S. Census) that permit the respondent only one ethnic identity. We have tried to be more flexible with the youth poll questionnaires by providing the usual list of race/ethnic groups, but letting them "check all that apply." In Table 1, we combined the responses of those who checked more than one race/ethnic category with the responses of those who checked "other."

Family types also permitted flexibility in response. A 2-parent "blended" family is one in which the young person is living with two parents, but one is a step-parent. An "extended family" is one that includes members other than parents and children; it may include grandparents or aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

2. D. Elkind, *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1984), p. 41.

3. D. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, p. 41.

4. State juvenile facility residents not included in this discussion.

5. D. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, p. 69.

6. D. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, p. 77.

7. M. Czikszentmihalyi and R. Larson, *Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp. 70-76.

8. G. M. Ingersoll, *Adolescents*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), pp. 22-27. The concept of development tasks was proposed initially by Robert Havighurst in 1948.

9. N. T. Ellis and M. R. Torabi, *The Indiana Student Health Survey* (Indianapolis, IN: The Indiana Department of Education, 1992), p. 49.

10. Arnold Gesell, whose detailed studies of the same group of children from infancy through mid-adolescence defined "normal" child development, used the term "verbal violence" to describe the heightened name-calling that typically occurs in early adolescence when youngsters refine their abilities to identify the vulnerabilities of others.

11. J. S. Coleman, *The Adolescent Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1961).

12. About three-fourths (74%) of the girls and 59% of the boys (49% of the SJF boys, reporting on the schools they attended prior to incarceration) felt that drugs were a problem at their schools, however.

13. J. Erickson, *Indiana Youth Poll: Youths' Views of High School Life* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Youth Institute, 1991).

14. G. Stanley Hall, whose major work, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*, appeared in 1904, has been credited with the "invention" of adolescence. Hall popularized the view that adolescence is a critical period of life, typified by "storm and stress," yet a period of great promise when adult character begins to emerge.

15. R. C. Savin-Williams and T. J. Berndt, "Friendship and Peer Relations," in S. S. Feldman and G. R. Elliott (eds.) *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 307.

For Further Discussion

Research usually answers some of the questions that it sets out to ask, but raises many more. This was very true of this youth poll. Even in the midst of rapid and perplexing social change, many educators, parents, and youthworkers in community settings still too often go about recommending and creating programs and activities to help young people without including them in the planning. The Youth Poll responses demonstrate that young people have very definite ideas about friendships and peer relationships. We hope that young people and adults will use this report to stimulate discussion about the pleasures and the problems of moving from the worlds of adolescence into the worlds of adulthood.

Some suggested questions for discussion:

1. What is the impact of applying labels like "jock" or "nerd" to young people? What role do these labels have in stereotyping students and making it harder for them to be themselves?

2. Why do students make it so hard for other students to change their images? Why is it so much harder for girls than for boys? Is this fair? Should other students be more helpful to someone who is trying to change? If you said yes, how do you think this could happen?

3. What part do teachers, coaches, and school administrators play in forming the images that students have of themselves and of each other? Do these adults make it harder or easier for students to find comfortable places on the school's social ladder? As a rule, are these adults helpful or not helpful when a student is trying to change? What might they do differently?

4. Most of the young people who took part in the youth poll felt that their own judgment was most important when making decisions—even very important ones such as choosing a college or deciding on what to do after high school. Do young people have enough information to make good decisions? Where can the young people in your community go for advice if they need it?

5. Does everyone need a group of friends to belong to, or is it OK that some people seem to be "loners." What kinds of programs should be available to help young people improve their social skills if they want to. Should these programs be run in the schools or somewhere else in the community?

6. Many people believe that youth gangs are a growing problem. Respondents to the youth poll suggested that a lot of young people probably join delinquent gangs for the same reasons that they might join any group—to feel accepted and have friends to hang out with. What can be done to help young people fill these needs without joining gangs? Can gangs be "turned around" and made socially useful?

7. Some adults feel that traditional American values are falling by the wayside. Many of the responses that young people gave to the youth poll questions reflected values such as kindness, caring, helpfulness, and so forth. Other responses, however, suggested that a lot of young people are pretty self-centered. Do you think that students in your school should take a hard look at their values? What do you think they would find? Is this OK, or should it change? Why do you feel as you do?

To Read More About Adolescent Life

The books and reports that follow provide additional insights on adolescent life. Several of these resources discuss peer groups and relationships. All of the books and reports may be found in the collection of the Indiana Youth Institute's Resource Center.

Publications of the Indiana Youth Institute

Orfield, Gary and Paul, Faith, *High Hopes, Long Odds: A Major Report on Hoosier Teens and the American Dream*, 1993-1994.

Report of research that involved more than 5,000 Hoosier 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders, nearly 5,000 of their parents, and 389 of their guidance counselors. The study probed young people's aspirations for the future and the steps they were taking to realize these aspirations. Concludes with policy suggestions for lowering the odds faced by many of the state's young people.

Erickson, Judith B., *Indiana Youth Poll: Youths' Views of High School Life*, 1991.

Erickson, Judith B., *Indiana Youth Poll: Youth's Views of Life Beyond High School*, 1992.

These two reports summarize the views of more than 1,500 Indiana high-school students as they prepare to move toward adult life.

Smith, Doreen L., *Kids, Crime, and Court: The Juvenile Justice System in Indiana*, 1994.

This report provides a clear description of the juvenile justice system in Indiana—how youngsters enter the system, what happens to them when they are in it, and how they get out.

Erickson, Judith B., *The State of the Child in Indiana*, 1993.

Erickson, Judith B., ***Kids Count in Indiana** 1994 Data Book*, 1994.

These two volumes summarize statistical data describing the well-being of Hoosier children, youth, and their families; they discuss high risk behaviors of adolescents.

Additional publications

Elkind, David, *All Grown Up & No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1984.

By the author of The Hurried Child, *this account examines the consequences of facing adult challenges at too early an age. The book was written to help parents cope with the pressures facing today's teens.*

Hechinger, Fred M., *Fateful Choices: Healthy Youth for the 21st Century* (New York: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992).

This discussion of the challenges presented by risks and opportunities facing today's young adolescents focuses on physical and mental health issues. The author considers the potential of youth organizations as supplements to family life.

Dryfoos, Joy G. *Adolescents at Risk: Prevalence and Prevention* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

This work explores four key problem areas in the lives of many of today's adolescents: delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and school failure. The study shows the importance of intense individual attention, social skills training, exposure to the world of work, and broad, community-wide interventions.

Simmons, Roberta G. and Blyth, Dale A., *Moving into Adolescence: The Impact of Pubertal Change and School Context* (New York, NY: Aldine DeGruyter, 1987.

This report summarizes many years of research that followed the same group of young people from grade 5 into the often impersonal worlds of junior and senior high school. The research focused on the impact of major biological and environmental changes on adolescent well-being and behavior.

Feldman, S. Shirley, and Elliott, Glen R., (Eds.), *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

A comprehensive overview of current knowledge about normal adolescent development, and what more must be learned if institutions designed to guide young people through this sometimes troubled period are to do their work well.

Hamburg, David A., *Today's Children: Creating a Future for a Generation in Crisis* (New York, NY: Random House, 1992).

Takes a long view of today's children and adolescents and how families and youth-serving institutions can put knowledge to work to protect young people from the pitfalls of growing up in a troubled society.

Ingersoll, Gary M., *Adolescents*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989).

A textbook for students of adolescent development. Covers the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that occur during the adolescent years from the perspective of the normal developmental tasks of this period of life.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Larson, Reed, *Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1984).

The two authors, both psychologists, provided 75 teens with beepers and signalled them at random, asking them to record their thoughts and feelings as they participated in their daily lives. The result provides a detailed portrait of the day-to-day world of the American teen.

Ellis, Nancy T., and Torabi, Mohammad R., *The Indiana Student Health Survey* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Education, 1992).

More than 2,000 Hoosier 9th- and 12th-grade students took part in this survey of adolescent health behaviors. Report covers accidents and injuries, suicide and homicide, substance use and abuse, sexual behaviors, diet, weight and physical activity, and more.

Indiana Prevention Resource Center, *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents.* Institute for Drug Abuse Prevention Monograph No. 94-1 (Bloomington, IN: IPRC, 1994).

Report of the fourth annual survey of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use among nearly 82,000 Hoosier students in grades 6-12. Presents gender and grade-level differences in use patterns; national comparisons.

INDIANA YOUTH POLL

Individual Questionnaire

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female **Age on last birthday:** _____

Do you consider yourself: *(Check all that apply)*

___ White ___ Asian ___ Hispanic ___ African American ___American Indian _____Other

Grade in School: ___ JH ___ 9 ___ 10 ___ 11 ___ 12 __ HS Grad __ GED

School: _____
(if not in school now, list last high school attended)

Zip Code where you live: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Who of the following live with you?

___ Father ___ Stepfather ___ Grandparents ___ Guardian
___ Mother ___ Stepmother ___ Your own child ___ Others (friends)
___ Brothers or sisters ___ Other relatives ___ I live alone

1. Is there someone you would consider your "best friend"? ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**
   If **Yes**: Is your best friend ___ male or ___ female?
   How long have you known him or her? _____
   Where did you meet your best friend? _____

2. Is your best friend also your steady boy or girlfriend? ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

3. What are the qualities that you like most about your closest friends?

4. What do you and your closest friends argue about most?

5. If there was one thing you could change about your closest friends, what would it be?

6. If there was one thing you could change about yourself, what would it be?

7. Do you have a ***group*** of friends that you hang out with? ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

If you said **Yes**, please answer the following about the members of the **group you hang out with most**.

a. How many are in the group now? _____
b. How many are male? _____ female? _____
c. How many are related to you? _____
d. How many are from a different school than yours? _____
e. How many are more than 2 years older than you? _____
f. How many are more than 2 years younger than you? _____
g. How many have different religious beliefs than yours? _____
h. How many are of a different race or ethnic group than you? _____

8. Where did you first meet the friends who are in this group?

9. Different people end up playing different roles in groups. How often would you say that <u>you</u> are the one who does the following:

I do this...	**A Lot**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
Think up new places to go and things to do	____	____	____
Remind the group of rules like curfews	____	____	____
Am the first to wear a new style of clothes	____	____	____
Am the first to wear a new hair style	____	____	____
Try to smooth over hurt feelings and arguments	____	____	____
Make sure everybody gets to places on time	____	____	____
Decide who should or should not be a member	____	____	____

10. Do you have other friends or groups of friends beside the members of the group you described above? ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**
If you said **Yes**, how do you keep up your friendship?

11. Are you an active member of a religious youth group?

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **Used to be, but not any more**

12. Are you an active member of a community youth group (such as 4-H, Scouts, YM or YW, Boys' and Girls' Club)?

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **Used to be, but not any more**

13. Does your family like the friends you hang around with?
☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **Some of them**

Why or why not?

14. Do your closest friends feel comfortable coming over to your house to hang out?

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐ **Some of them** Why or why not?

15. Where do you and your friends spend most of the time that you are together?

16. What kinds of things do you do when you are together?

17. About how much time do you spend doing things with your friends each week? ____ hours

18. About how much time do you spend doing things with members of your family each week?
____ hours

19. Is there a group in your school that you would like to be in but are not? ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO**

If **Yes**, what do you think is keeping you out of the group?

20. Picture a supermarket where the groceries are not vegetables and frozen TV dinners but personality traits and abilities. We are giving you $100 to stock up on what is most important to social success *in your high school*. You must spend all your money, but spend your cash with care. Spend a lot on things that are most important and none at all on those that don't matter in your school. Whatever you do, make sure your total adds up to $100 before you move on to the next question.

$ ___ How good your personality is
___ How smart you are
___ How much money your family has
___ Your religion
___ What neighborhood group you belong to
___ Your race or ethnic group
___ What kind of attitude you have
___ How good an athlete you are
___ How good looking you are
___ Other *(please specify)*_____

$ 100 Total *(Total dollars must add up to 100)*

21. Adults worry a lot about the influences on young people today. How important is your own judgement or what your parents, boy or girlfriend, or friends think, when you make decisions about each of the following:

Circle *the number on* ***each*** *line below to indicate how important each one is when you make decisions.*

1 = extremely important 2 = sort of important 3 = not important at all

Decisions about:	**What Parent Thinks**	**What Boy/ Girlfriend Thinks**	**What Friends Think**	**My Own Judgment**
Clothes you wear	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Music you listen to	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Elective courses you take in school	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Extra-curricular activities you join	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Your friends	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
The college you want to attend	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Whether to cheat on a test	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Your plans after high school	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
The after-school job you have now	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Your plans for the summer	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Whether to drink alcohol	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Whether to do drugs	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Whether or not to have sex	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3

22. How do you feel about the following statements? *(Mark* ***one*** *circle for each statement)*

	Agree Strongly	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**	**No Opinion**
I am a person of worth, equal to others.	O	O	O	O	O
I do not feel safe in my school.	O	O	O	O	O
I do not feel safe near where I live.	O	O	O	O	O
I have been put down by other students because my family has a low income.	O	O	O	O	O
I am popular with other students in my class.	O	O	O	O	O
I know young people who carry weapons that could hurt someone.	O	O	O	O	O
I have been put down by other students because of my race or ethnic group.	O	O	O	O	O
Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops me.	O	O	O	O	O
I have been put down by other students because of _____	O	O	O	O	O
Drugs are not a problem in my school.	O	O	O	O	O
At my school there's a lot of pressure to have sex whether you want to or not.	O	O	O	O	O

23. Is there anything we didn't ask you that you would like to tell adults or other young people about peer relationships?

GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions for the Recorder

The recorder's job is the most important. Without clear, accurate and complete notes of the group discussion, we will not have a good understanding of your group's opinions.

The recorder's job is to write down as much as possible of what is being said in response to the questions. Don't decide what would be important for us to know; just write down whatever people say. Encourage everyone to participate and give opinions.

1. Read each question out loud to your group.

2. On the lines provided, indicate the question number and begin writing everything and anything people say in response to the question.

3. After everyone has spoken, go on to the next question.

4. Before you begin, please read this paragraph to your group:

   As group members, please try to make it easy to record your comments by talking slowly and clearly. This does not mean that your answers have to be well planned or carefully worded, although clarity would certainly help. You can be assured of confidentiality since no name will be recorded.

5. **Clip all the Individual Questionnaires for your group to your Group Questionnaire when you are finished.**

Page 1

1. What qualities do you look for in a friend of the same sex?

2. What qualities do you look for in a friend of the opposite sex?

3. What are some of the reasons why friendships break up?

4. What would be the hardest thing for you to forgive, if a friend did it?

5. What kind of person would you not want as a friend?

6. Think back to when you were in junior high school. Did you choose your friends differently then than you do now? What are the differences.

Page 2

1. In a lot of high schools, students sort themselves into categories based on their image or reputation. Does this happen in your school?
   How many say: Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____

2. If there are such categories in your school, list the main ones.
   After you have made your list:
   a. Write the name of the category that would be the *most* popular in your school here → _____
   b. Write the name of the category that would be the *least* popular in your school here → _____

3. If a student wanted to change his or her image in your school, would it be possible? Why or why not? Would it be harder for boys or harder for girls to change their image? Why?

4. If someone in your school started going around with the wrong crowd, what could you do?

Page 3

1. When you are with your friends, what type of things do you do together?

2. What is your group's idea of an inexpensive way to have fun together?

3. What is your group's idea of a really special occasion?

Page 4

1. What is the difference between a clique, a group of friends, and a gang?

2. Why would students want to be in a clique? Are cliques a problem at your school? If you said yes, in what ways are cliques a problem?

3. Why would students want to be in a gang? Are gangs a problem at your school? If you said yes, in what ways are gangs a problem?

Page 5

1. How do peer groups help you figure out who you are?

2. How do peer groups prevent you from expressing yourself as you would like?

3. How do groups use positive peer pressure on their members?

4. How do groups use negative peer pressure on their members?

5. As you have grown older, have peer pressures increased or decreased? Why?

10 Blueprints for Healthy Development

The Indiana Youth Institute's blueprints for healthy development of all Indiana's children are based on the premise that every child in Indiana–regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, physically or mentally challenging condition, geographical location or economic status–deserves an equal opportunity to grow up in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.

Building a Healthy Body

Indiana's youth will be born at full term and normal birth weight to healthy mothers. They will receive a well-balanced diet in adequate supply to grow strong bodies to acceptable height for their age. They will be provided a balance of physical activity and rest in a safe and caring environment. They and their families will have access to good medical care and educational opportunities that will teach them how to abstain from health-endangering activities and engage in health-enhancing activities.

Building Positive Relationships

Indiana's children will experience love and care of parents and other significant adults. They will develop wholesome relationships while learning to work collaboratively with peers and adults.

Building Self-Acceptance

Indiana's children and youth will perceive themselves as lovable and capable; they will act with self-confidence, self-reliance, self-direction, and self-control. They will take pride in their accomplishments. As they develop self-esteem, they will have positive feelings about their own uniqueness as well as that of others.

Building Active Minds

Indiana's young people will have stimulating and nurturing environments that build on their individual experiences and expand their knowledge. Each young person will reach his or her own potential, gaining literacy and numeric skills that empower the lifelong process of asking questions, collecting and analyzing information, and formulating valid conclusions.

Building Spirit and Character

Indiana's young people will grow up learning to articulate values upon which to make ethical decisions and promote the common good. Within safe boundaries, children and youth will test limits and understand relationships between actions and consequences.

Building Creativity and Joy

Indiana's young people will have diverse opportunities to develop their talents in creative expression (e.g., music, dance, literature, visual arts, theater); to appreciate the creative talents of others; and to participate in recreational activities that inspire constructive, lifelong satisfaction.

Building a Caring Community

Indiana's communities will encourage their young people to see themselves as valued participants in community life. In addition to being recipients of services that express the communities' concerns for their safety and well-being, young citizens will become resources who will improve their surroundings, support the well-being of others, and participate in decisions that affect community life.

Building a Global Perspective

Indiana's children and youth will learn to see themselves as part of the global community, beyond ethnic, religious, racial, state, and national boundaries. In formal and nonformal educational experiences, they will have opportunities to become familiar with the history, political issues, languages, cultures, and ecosystems that affect global life and future well-being.

Building Economic Independence

Indiana's young people will be exposed to a variety of educational and employment experiences that will contribute to vocational and career options. Their formal and nonformal educational experiences will prepare them to make the transition from school to work, to contribute to the labor force, and to participate in an economic environment that will grow increasingly more complex and will require lifelong learning.

Building a Humane Environment

All children will have access to a physically safe environment, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of violence. They will have adequate housing and living conditions; safe neighborhoods; clean air, food, and water. Their environment will be free from toxins, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. All children will have an opportunity to learn how to protect their environment for the future.

The Indiana Youth Institute
Working with adults who care about youth

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The Indiana Youth Institute was established in 1988 as an independent, nonprofit center. IYI is an intermediary agency serving the youth of Indiana by supporting adults who care about youth. It provides youth-serving adults and policymakers with research, training and advocacy.

Price: $7.50